COMIC TALK EXTRA #1 - SEPTEMBER 1993

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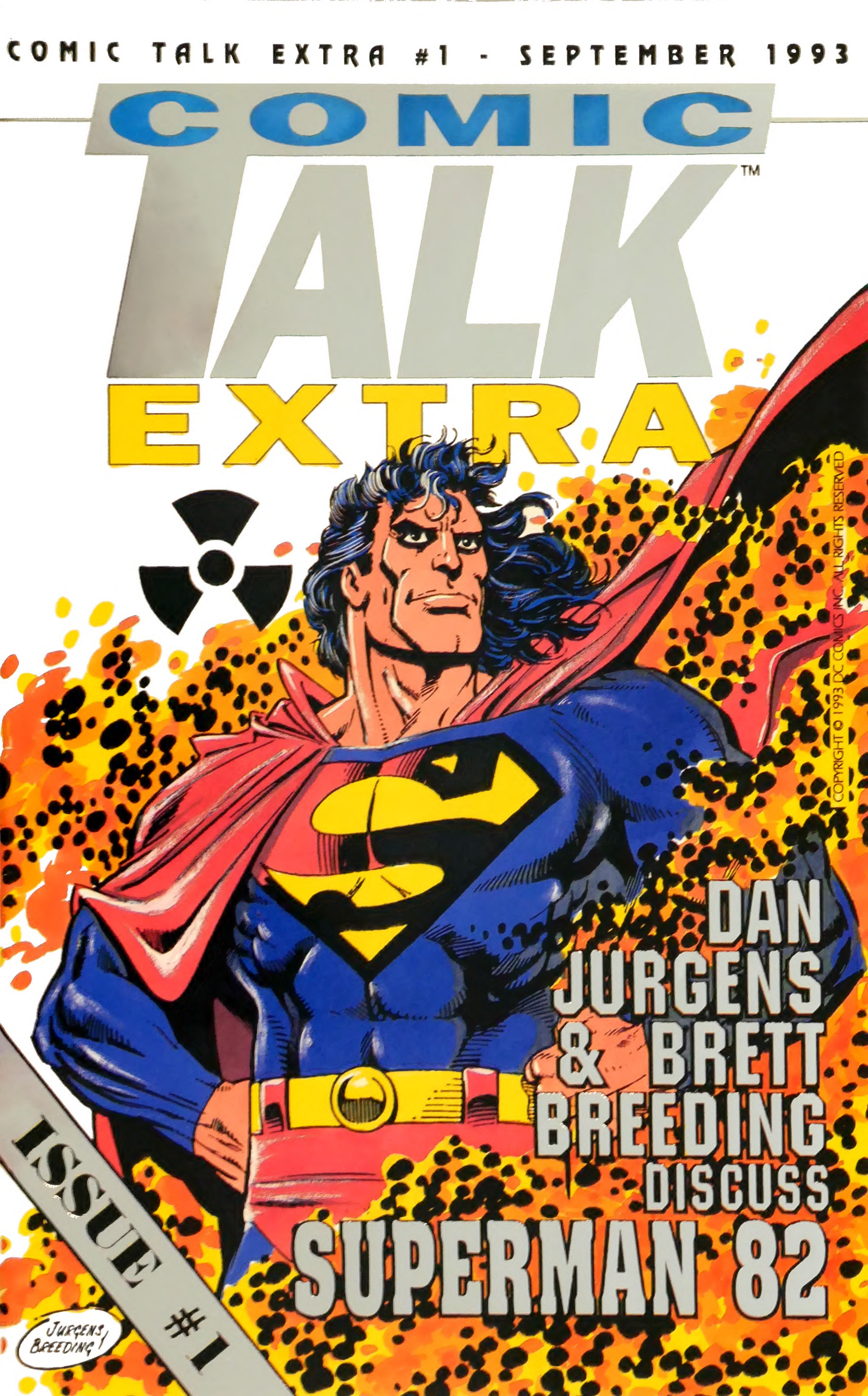

DAN JURGENS & BRETT BREEDING DISCUSS SUPERMAN 82

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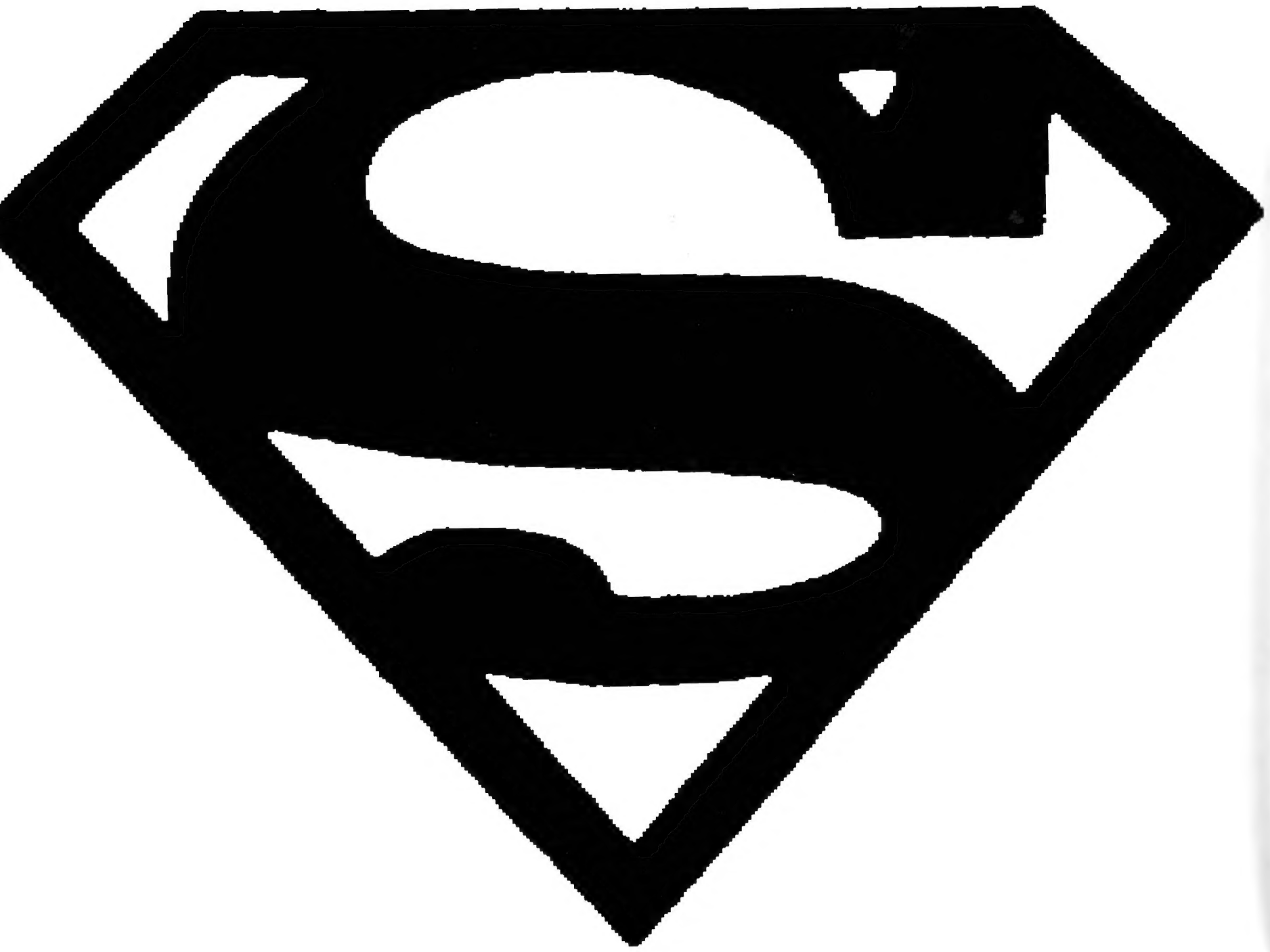

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Volume 1 - Number 1 - SEPTEMBER - 1993

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INTRODUCTION:

A number of years ago, I sat in on a convention panel that featured Dan Jurgens. At the time he was promoting his new book, BOOSTER GOLD, and discussing his plans for the upcoming series. Towards the end of the panel, he began to field questions from the audience. One person asked how Booster would be integrated into the DC Universe. Dan replied that we should expect a visit from the Legion of Super Heroes and, since the book was set in Metropolis, Superman would play a major role in the series.

It seems like that last statement wasn't meant for Booster alone.

Between Jurgens' time on BOOSTER GOLD and his current work on the new Metal Man mini-series lies an incredible six-year stretch on Superman comics that continues to this day.

Continues to this day? But how? Superman's dead, you must have read that. It was in all the papers. Across the country, newspapers and television stations carried the sad news concerning the death of this American icon... and Dan Jurgens was one of the people who killed him. At the conclusion of *Superman* #75, the never-ending battle ended. In the next issue he was buried. Jurgens, whose name was featured quite prominently on both those issues, admitted that there was no changing what had happened.

Yet now, with *Superman* #82, Dan Jurgens plans to bring Superman back to his full glory. I recently spoke with Dan about the character, its future and why this sudden change of heart.

Dan DiDio

BRETT:

Dan DiDio: What was the first issue of *Superman* you worked on?

Brett Breeding: Technically it was *Superman Annual* #1, which was way back in 1986. I was still working for Marvel at the time, but Mike Carlin was now the editor. I did that with Ron Frenz and John Byrne. The second year I did *Superman Annual* #2 with Ron Frenz and Roger Stern. That's all the *Superman* I did for awhile and then Mike gave me some odd jobs in '87 and '88. I was working on *Thor* at the time and *Thor* kind of came to an abrupt end, and there were a lot of changes at that point going on in my life. I was moving from where I had been born and raised, in Delaware, to Georgia, and my grandparents both had heart attacks and were sick in the hospital at the time, and there just was a lot of stuff churning around. I had been taken off of *Thor*, thanks to the wisdom of Ralph Macchio and the interference of Tom DeFalco, and in trying to find work just to fill in the time in between getting packed and going to the hospital, I called Al Milgrom and asked if I could do a *Marvel Fanfare* portfolio where I would get some of my favorite pencillers to pencil something for me and ink it, or have some of my favorite inkers ink something I had pencilled and just play around with different pencils and stuff that I've always wanted to work with. He said sure, so one of the people I called was Jerry Ordway. About the time I moved in June, I called Jerry and he had just returned from Ohio where they had had what I guess technically was the first Superman summit. There was a big Superman Expo there that year, and they had had a meeting with Mike, Jerry, George Perez, Curt Swan, and I think a couple other people working on *Superman*. I don't know if Byrne and Marv Wolfman were there. Apparently my name had been raised at that meeting. George Perez was coming back...bringing *Action Comics* back into full Superman stories, and my name had been thrown around. George was only going to be doing layouts. They weren't breakdowns but just layouts and they needed somebody that could come in and finish the pencilling first and then finish the job in ink. Mike had made some comment that Jerry passed on to me, and his only concern was deadlines and keeping up with the work. I called Mike and Mike's reaction was,"Oh I'm going to kill Jerry." Mike was concerned about my being able to keep up with the deadlines. He had a couple of people that had done samples for him, and I guess just to make it fair I did samples on George's first three pages for him and I ended up getting the assignment. It was going to take several months for the assignment. Actually the issue of *Action* that George was scheduled to start was several months away at that point so I started with Kerry Gammill and

my first official regular assignment on Superman was *Superman* #26. The cover to that had a voodoo doll of Superman on it.

DD: It was the *Invasion* crossover if I'm not mistaken.

BB: I believe the next issue, #27, was actually the *Invasion* crossover, but what was going on at that point were the beginnings of Superman's nervous breakdown and posing as Gang Buster. Then that immediately led into his exile in space. The exile in space lasted quite awhile. Through that I did about four issues for Kerry and then I did my first issue with Dan Jurgens, which was a fill-in on Superman. I did an annual with Curt Swan and a few other pieces, and then finally I started with George. From there I guess the rest is history.

DD: How does it feel to be part of the Superman team? Just going for this ride must be kind of interesting.

BB: Well, I've been doing this now for close to 14 years and the last five years have definitely been the best part of it. It was a good experience working on the books long before any of the big publicity and success came along. I absolutely enjoyed working on the book. The people I've worked with all along have been a real inspiration to me. I miss very much Jerry Ordway being with the books. One of the things I enjoyed so much when I started was Jerry's work. It was something that I tried to shoot for. It made me better and at the same time Jerry is the kind of person that you can talk to about it. He's a very down-to-earth person. He's not at all pretentious about his work. He was very helpful and at the same time a lot of fun to hang out with at the summit. It was a real good situation. Mike Carlin created an atmosphere from the very first summit I was at, which was July of '89. I started Superman with Kerry in July of '88 and July of '89 was when we had our first summit. At that point Dan Jurgens had been hired on regularly and Dan was at the summit, and Jerry, Roger Stern, Kerry Gammill, and just about everybody including the colorists. Mike made these meetings, which aren't done regularly in the first place, and they certainly never had included the inkers or even the colorists, to include our colorists. His feeling was everybody is a part of the team and everybody can have the opportunity to suggest ideas and get them up on the boards. It really felt like I was part of something. The irony to all of it is, after all these years, the success on the books in some ways has taken away a little bit of the fun for me.

"It was a good experience working on the books long before any of the big publicity and success came along."

DD: So not just writers have input into stories.

BB: You know people have story ideas that they want to do maybe for personal reasons–it's a character they like, or it's a concept that they want to do, or it's something they think we need and then we do these crossover things where there kind of are events within the books. The storyline crosses over, we do jam issues, and every time we do those my intent is to bring more readers to *Superman. Superman* for a long time now has had very modest sales. Depending on how you want to look at that, you can have

I'VE BEEN OUT OF ACTION TOO LONG!
EVEN THOUGH IT'S STILL MILES AWAY--
--I CAN STILL FEEL THE SEARING HEAT AND VIBRATIONS GENERATED BY THAT ENORMOUS ENGINE!
HAVE I FAILED?!

"I think the first objective ... was to do stories that people would want to read."

what I consider to be the Marvel mentality–just sell the book, get the numbers, and make the money. The sales is what you're after, any way you can get it. On the *Superman* books, I think our philosophy has been we want to increase the sales but the objective is to increase the readership. We want the people that are buying it to read it. If we can get people interested in our stories, we can get them to read it, and read all of the titles, then it brings the sales with it. I think the first objective, at least the way I've always perceived it, was to do stories that people would want to read and they'd pick it up. So we came up with these little events and "Panic in the Sky" was one of these things. At the time it happened everyone was telling us "Oh it's sold out, you can't find copies," and we thought this is great, this is going to push everything further and further. When the figures came out, the sales weren't even...they were like a high point for several months but they didn't break any records. They were the same sales we had been getting pretty much, but it got a lot of attention. When the Doomsday thing came along, when we were plotting that in meetings, there was no comment ever made about this is going to sell millions, or we're going to break records, or whatever. There were ideas about how to promote it this way, can we maybe put it in a black bag?. We didn't know until very shortly before the book actually hit the stands what it was going to be. I don't think it dawned on me really until the day it hit...when the media broke the story, last August I guess it was, when it became a big deal. People were calling and I had to have my number unlisted. It got crazy. The day the book came out I did a CNN interview in New York City nine o'clock in the morning for a friend of mine, retailer Steve Gursky of Steve's Comic Relief, who has a whole lot of stores in New Jersey, he had been given...

DD: He opened one in Manhattan, didn't he?

BB: Yes.

DD: At A&S Plaza.

BB: Yes. Very nice guy. He's a friend of mine for many years now. DC had been approached for the interview. They didn't want to do it so they decided to give it to a retailer. They gave it to Steve because Steve's big in the area and they know him. Steve had me already lined up to come into his store the day the book came out. He says, "Well, I got the guy that's doing the book.

Do you want to interview him instead?" CNN said sure. So I went in and did a five minute interview. After the interview there were a lot of people running around CNN wanting me to do another interview. Then I went to the store, about one in the afternoon and there was a line in the whole front entranceway to the mall. It was incredible, hundreds upon hundreds of people. They handed out 400 tickets and then they ran out toward the end. I'd say probably 500 people each getting three, four books signed in two hours time, and just pushing into the store to buy more books. He was sold out in most of his stores, from what I remember, of the collector's edition by eleven o'clock that morning and I didn't do the first store appearance until roughly one in the afternoon. The store at the Franklin Mills Mall, which is the largest mall on the east coast or something, same thing--it was an absolute madhouse. It's a tiny store in the food court, and the whole food court was just overwhelmed with people waiting in line to get the book

"After the interview there were a lot of people running around CNN wanting me to do another interview."

signed. All of those people were there because Superman died and they wanted their *Superman* book signed. They weren't there to see me. They were there to see the guy that killed Superman. They were there because they wanted to know if Superman is dead. I mean, that was very evident. All of this, and there are people who'd like to think differently, but all of this is about Superman dying. I have people here today working on my house, putting a deck on the back of my house. The contractor is probably in his late 40's, maybe even early 50's, remembering Superman when he was a kid. He's heard about all of this. He's questioning me about it. He knows nothing about comic books, but everybody knows Superman and everybody has now heard Superman's dead and everybody is curious about it. It's kind of scary how big it got so quickly. I kind of equate it to finding your own private little island somewhere and then all of a sudden some big corporation comes along and finds it and turns it into Honolulu. Honolulu's a perfect example. Twenty years ago, Honolulu was a paradise to go to. It was not built up and was kind of like an exclusive place where you could relax and get away from things. Now it's like, hell, one of the largest cities in the country. It's incredible. The charm has gone away from it. Some of that has actually happened on *Superman,* for me anyway. Sitting back quietly and doing stories and doing good work has kind of been overshadowed by this big, super thing. With that, to kind of paraphrase Stan Lee, comes great responsibility. All of a sudden now we feel the need to keep it going, manufacture or create our events around keeping this thing turning. Now all of a sudden we're to some degree falling into that gimmick mill I hate so much in comics. Some companies will put a foil cover on a comic book and give you absolutely nothing inside and charge four bucks for it. On the *Superman* books we started to

"They weren't there to see me. They were there to see the guy that killed Superman."

"*X-Men* #1 ... was the most whorish thing I've ever seen in comic books."

have some cover enhancements and stuff and we've always wanted that and we're happy to get it. The down side to that is it kind of puts us in the same...with some of the other people in the industry that are doing this. The difference is, as I see it, is when the kids open the books they're still getting the best artwork we can produce and the best stories we can produce.

DD: But also at DC you also get the option to buy it with the enhancement or without.

BB: Yeah. The problem with that though is that that's also a gimmick or it can be perceived as a gimmick because then what you've done in this fan market is create a second book that fans are going to have to buy at least one of each of, if not three or four, and that kind of rings of the *X-Men* #1 coming out with four books and then a trade paperback and all you got was a different cover. I thought that was the most whorish thing I've ever seen in comic books. The fact the retailers supported it the way that they did, they deserve to get burned. That may sound real harsh, but as long as comics keeps generating this stuff and get the kids to buy it, it's going to make it that much harder for those of us that are really interested in doing good art and good stories to get noticed, and that's been part of the problem with *Superman*. Here's a character that sold six million comic books or something a month back in the '60s. We've always had good sales but in comparison to things like *X-Men* and other top books we weren't in that category, but I felt we had a better product. It's so hard to get noticed when the fan mentality out there is to hoard and to buy for the wrong reasons.

DD: ABC's going to be coming out with a Superman series. Is that going to have any effect on your books?

BB: We have these discussions and debates in our meetings and on the phone and the opinions seem to me to be very mixed. I personally don't see why it would affect the sales of the books be-

cause I don't know what audience the television show is going after. From everything I've read and been told and that's been publicized about it, it's a romance. It's going to focus around the *Moonlighting*-type relationship between Clark Kent and Lois Lane with some Superman thrown in. So there you have people that are tuning in to see *Moonlighting*, are they going to be interested in the element of super-heroes thrown in? The kids and fans that want to see Superman, are they going to be turned off by all this mush and gooey stuff? It seems to me that the show may be at odds with itself and are they in essence going to just end up with no audience? In either case I don't know what the show's going to do. I'm glad to see the show because again it's another way that Superman gets out there into the public eye. From the things that I have seen, the people that are involved in it, I have hopes that it can be a good show. It may not exactly be what we're doing in the comic books but some things don't translate into television and comics the same way. If it is a good show...I loved the Flash and it got a lot of critical acclaim, but apparently the ratings weren't there. I was very sorry to see it go because I thought it was very well done. I thoroughly enjoyed it. If the Superman show is equally as good, even if it's cancelled after the first season, I will be happy to have had it around. Personally I don't think any of that is going to translate into the comics.

"It seems to be that they show may be at odds with itself."

DD: I saw some of the reels at a meeting, and they're playing it light.

BB: Well, they are going to be premiering the pilot episode at the San Diego convention, from what I understand. We have seen the 15 minute trailer. At our last meeting a Lorimar representative sat in with us and she brought the 15 minute trailer and we all got to sit and comment, and we had gotten copies of the script or at least one of the versions of the script several months ago. I read through

it and I was disappointed to see some things they weren't following that we were doing. Marvel seems to have an incredible problem with their material translated to the small screen or the big screen. DC seems to do a better job of it but there's always variations from the comic book. They don't seem to me to be the things that you would expect are harder to do in television. Namely the little twists they put on his origin, or just the way he comes about getting his costume, or the way he comes about becoming Superman. There is a scene in that trailer where he gets his costume. Which is to me very silly. It's not very dramatic at all. They kind of play with the origin. It's like they don't follow the original one, and they don't follow the John Byrne one, and they don't follow the way it was done in the movie with Christopher Reeve. They kind of create their own. So it's like we're putting Superman out there, but we're giving the public yet another version. One guy in local news here, the Philadelphia news channel, not too long ago when they were doing a story on this, said Clark Kent doesn't even work for the newspaper anymore, he's working for a television show as an anchor. Well, he hasn't been an anchor for 20 years. People's perceptions of what these characters are are all over the place. Some people think that Clark Kent's a bubbling goof like he was

WAIT FOR ME! I WANT TO... HAVE TO BE IN ON THIS!
YOU LOOK BEAT! IF YOU'RE POWERS ARE GONE YOU SHOULD--
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, THAT ARGUMENT DIDN'T KEEP YOU AWAY!

"--IF AND WHEN THIS WHOLE MESS IS STRAIGHTENED OUT!"
ALL THE PIPES AND CABLES SEEM TO LEAD THIS WAY!
MAYBE THAT'S WHERE WE'LL FIND THE BOSS! KEEP MOVING!
WAIT!

"People's perceptions of what these characters are are all over the place."

"... they still don't stick with the material that has inspired them to do the show."

portrayed with Christopher Reeve. They don't realize that he's not anymore. We try to make him just a regular kind of a cool guy. There are so many perceptions and now yet another version is being created, and essentially being done because of the success with the *Death of Superman* series, and the renewed interest in Superman in the public eye in the last year, and they want to do this but yet they still don't stick with the material that has inspired them to do the show. They still go off on their own. That bothers me. There are little things that bother me. The costume itself was kind of poor and also he had laced boots. Why do we have this variation? We've got four Superman movies with a good costume. The Superboy mini-series, or syndicated series, the second costume they did with the second Superboy was terrific. We were able to give input to the woman at Lorimar that we had problems with the costume and the little things that we liked or didn't like and she seemed very responsive, so I'm actually looking forward more to the subsequent shows in the series to see if any of these changes actually occur.

DD: Why did they come to you guys? Was it just out of curiosity or were they looking for your input?

BB: Gee, I guess you would have

to ask someone like Jenette or Mike Carlin...I don't know that they necessarily came to us. Lorimar's owned by Warner Brothers, just as DC Comics is. When Lorimar realized that their parent company owned Superman, with its success, they decided to do the show, and I guess some of the people involved are familiar with what we're doing with the book, they're fans. Mike Carlin was very much involved with the Superboy show. He's very involved in a lot of things. He's well-respected in the company and in the industry. I think that they look for his input and Mike tries very hard to get us included, as well. I think he does this because of what we've done and we should share in that success. Some of the merchandising that's coming out, I have stuff popping up every once in awhile, new watches and things. I have friends that still work for Marvel, Marvel doesn't give you anything that you do.

"Mike Carlin was very much involved with the Superboy show."

DD: I've heard that, from different people saying that...

BB: You don't get anything out of them and I got stuff showing up, not even knowing that it exists, just saying thank you, we have this watch because of work that you did. The most recent thing I got included a letter stating almost this, this exists because of what you contributed, because of what we did on Superman and you were part of that and this is our way of saying thank you. That's part of the fun of being on these books. I contribute a lot of story ideas. I'm probably one of the more vocal inkers so that's why I appreciate the fact inkers are included in these meetings a lot. I color my own covers now. I may do some of my own separations coming up. These are opportunities that I've always wanted in my career that no one else was willing to give me, until Mike Carlin. Hopefully, having been given the opportunity, I've proven myself not only to Mike but to other people there, and now other people are talking to me about maybe coloring this poster, or maybe doing this, and for input on story ideas in the creation of

some characters, feeling like I'm contributing to it. There's a feeling of being appreciated on these books and I guess for some people it comes down to just getting out there and making your product, making your money and be done with it. Comics has become a very lucrative, very big industry in the 14 years I've been around. It's changed dramatically. Somewhere in the mid-'80s it changed into this Image-type stuff. People like Ron Frenz, John Romita and these kind of people that are really solid artists, Dick Giordano, me, we're kind of dinosaurs in a way to the new style. Marvel apparently is dictating to people. I know some inkers that have said they've been told that if they can't ink in the Image style they can't work on certain projects. It was never that way. You did the best work you could, if you were good you got work, if you didn't you got less work or you didn't get any. Now it's like you've got to look a certain way even if that's not you. I don't have to deal with any of that.

DD: Look at Herb Trimpe.

BB: People have kind of laughed at me or looked at me very startled that I'm under contract. Whether or not I continue when my next contract is up next spring, I feel very comfortable for the most part with DC because I know I'm appreciated there. I know that there are opportunities there and people aren't going to shut doors in my face because you're just an inker or you're just this or just that, or you can't ink this way. I've played around with my style of work recently, very specifically it started on the Doomsday issue, the death issue, #75, playing around with some elements of that Image style, some of the aspects of it that I like and incorporating it into my work. It's subtle, I think. It doesn't hit you over the head. It's maybe a little bit more of a contemporary look over the traditional style I grew up with and was raised on. There's a sense for me personally with the people I

"People have kind of laughed at me or looked at me very startled that I'm not under contract."

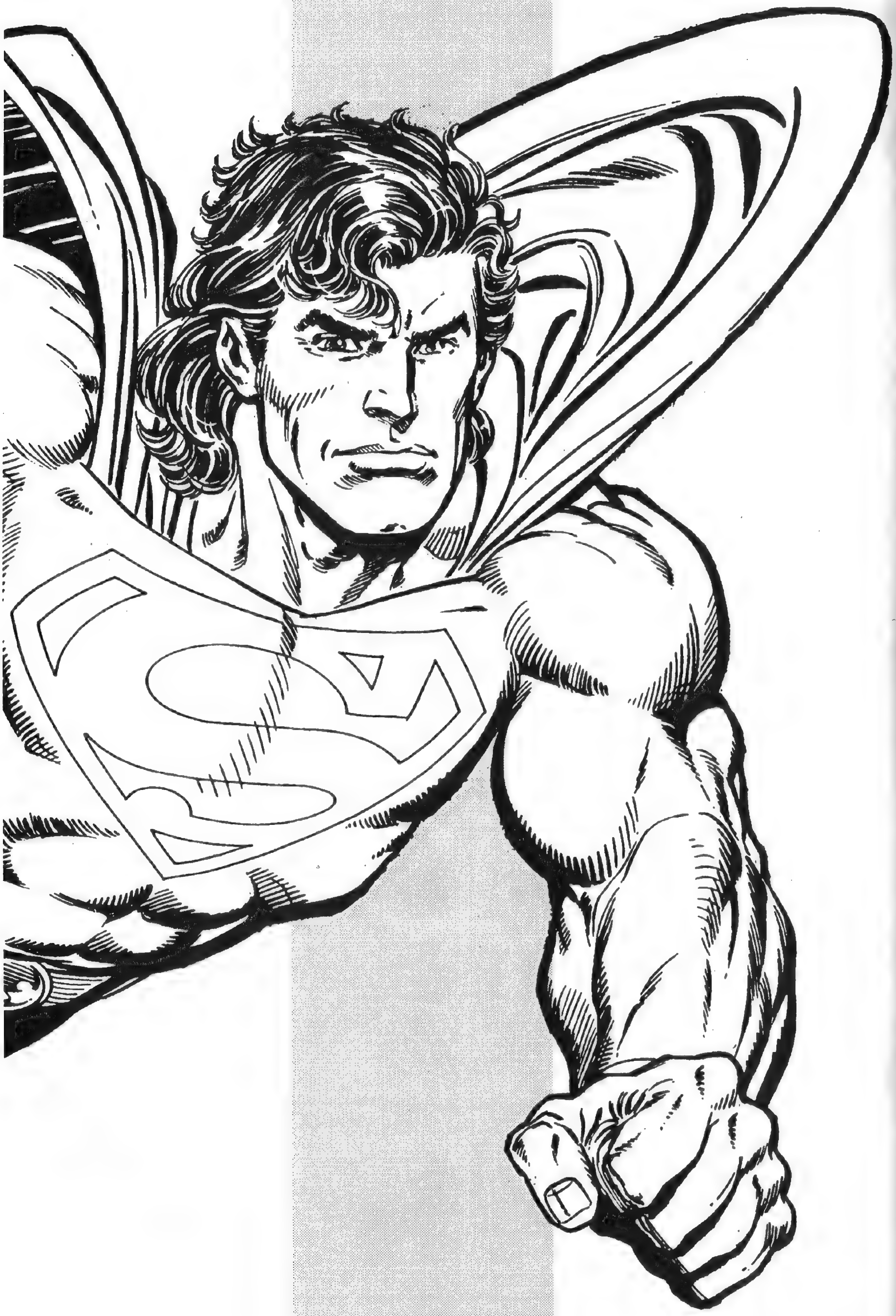
work with at DC that I get along with them, from my editor to Terri Cunningham, the managing editor, to the people that handle my checks, my vouchers, people that are pleasant to deal with. You know there are problems as there are with any job, but for the most part all around it's the best working experience and I feel very appreciated.

DD: Well, it seems like everybody's apologizing for being comfortable with a job.

BB: Plus Mike Carlin has pushed me to produce the most work in the last five years that I've done in my career. I've always had problems with deadlines. I've never been blind to that. I have always tried to do the best work and I have gotten to the point where I can do a lot of volume work in a very short period of time, and then I burn out. I've gotten pretty good at getting fast and still maintaining a good amount of work. Mike Carlin deserves, aside from the fact that I've still got to do the work, all the rest of the credit for sticking by me and pushing me and just giving me a lot of the opportunities to help me grow.

DD: When you were doing the *Death of Superman* was it definitely planned to bring him back?

BB: For the longest time we didn't know if we were. As I've told everybody, you kind of have to assume that with one of the most licensed characters in the world, the company's not going to let you just kill him off. Whether we can bring him back as somebody else, whether somebody else can be Superman or whatever we can do, we didn't know. Our concern was not cheating the fans, not doing a Bobby Ewing in the shower kind of deal. Like, we don't know how to get out of it so let's cheat. So at the next meeting, which came after #75 had hit and "Funeral for a Friend" was on the stands, the four Supermen came up as an idea at that meeting. It kind of evolved. We made a list of characters on the blackboard or note tablet of possibilities of the four Supermen, and then the different writers or teams picked which ones sounded interesting to them. Dan Jurgens had the Cyborg Superman, he kind of knew what he wanted to do with it. Some ideas, especially when you're the writer, if you have an idea spe-



cific to your character, you may not want to bring everything out in the meeting because then it may get changed. I walked into the meeting with this idea...I'm assuming this article does not get published until after...

DD: Yeah. Let's put it this way. I'm not sending it in until the end of August, beginning of September...I think it's September when it gets published.

BB: Okay. Well there is a...well, the resolution to what happens, I walked into the meeting with this idea of it having to do with Kryptonite, involving Kryptonite in the story. I mentioned it to Mike Carlin before going to the meeting and he liked it quite a bit. He kind of liked the twist of it, using Kryptonite as a means to resolve the whole "who is Superman" issue. In the meeting I brought that up and everybody kind of liked it. The interesting thing too was the Engine City thing. I suggested why not have Engine City be powered by Kryptonite because then that's how we can incorporate Kryptonite into the story and the two ideas melded themselves together. My idea for how the Kryptonite was actually used in the story, a couple of people were a little unsure about. Roger Stern had some objections

and I remember at this point a couple of people getting closer to the room and huddling, Louise Simonson, whatever, and everybody kind of liked the idea but they were trying to refine the idea so it would work for everyone.

DD: It's amazing that you can pull that off.

BB: Well everybody tries to work together. It doesn't necessarily work out. Again, I remember in the meeting the idea of Engine City or another city being blown up and Engine City being created was discussed. I saw it so visually I made the comment that the way I saw it was this space ship lands in the middle of the city and everybody looks up, it's like an invasion. Earth in comic books has been invaded so many times that people would just kind of ignore it, and then pull back and see a mushroom cloud and an explosion and then through the mist the spaceship would still be there. That just seems so dramatic. Dan is actually drawing and plotting the story. For one reason or another, he may not have liked the visualization discussed in the meeting, because if you look at the story now, the spaceship lands and a lot of little lines and things fall and it blows up the city, and people are in a panic and it's totally different. I personally feel it's a lot less dramatic, but that's kind of the crux of our meetings–you get together, you see what works, you put it

"I walked into the meeting with this idea of it having to do with Kryptonite, involving Kryptonite in the story."

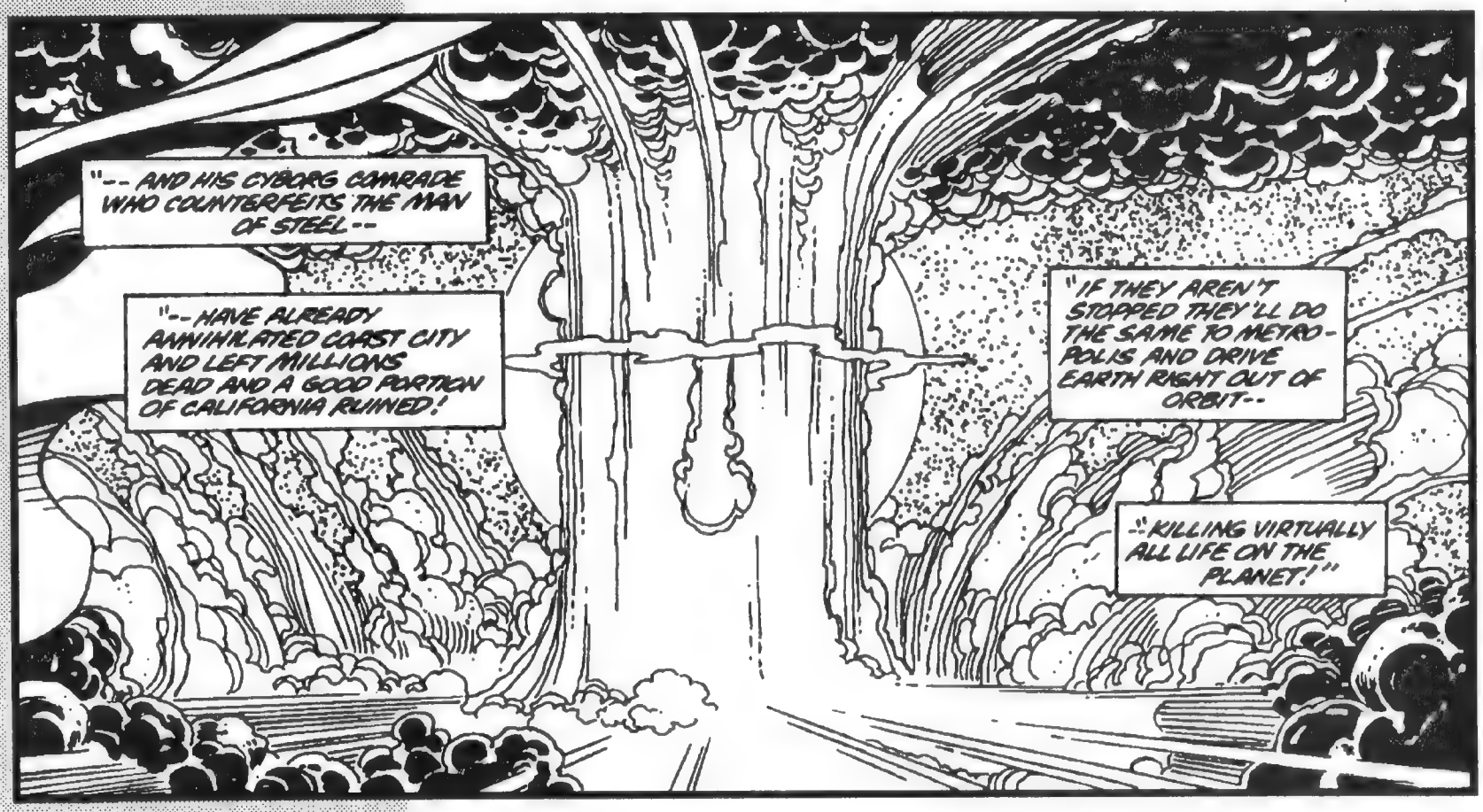
all on paper, and then really it's up the four people that are writing the books to go off and do it.

DD: *Superman* #82. Is his return plausible? Does it work for you, the return of Superman? Do you feel the audience is cheated in any way? We know he was dead...

BB: Let's put it this way: the audience now, if you take the numbers of books of *Superman* that have been sold in the last year it was like 14,000,000 comic books. Now that may not be 14,000,000 people but that's a lot of comic books. If you're going to consider that number to be your audience then you cannot possibly believe that everyone is going to accept what you've done. You're going to have almost as many different reactions to the story as are people that bought. I don't know that there is anything we could have done that would have elicited as universal a response to his resurrection as there was to his death. Because let's face it, when he dies everybody either likes it or they don't, but they're all, what, Superman's *dead*? When you bring him back all of a sudden everybody...even my mother was throwing ideas at me, "Oh well, Superman was born as a Siamese twin and they separated him at birth and now he's dead and his brother picks up a signal from wherever he is in space and comes to earth and takes his place." I'm like, "No mom, that's not how it worked." She's never read the books.

DD: That's pretty good for a mom.

BB: I've had friends give me Frankenstein-type story ideas. Everybody's got what they think should be done whether they read the books or not. I think that there are going to be some twists to how we get to the return. I think there are going to be some things that no one is going to have thought of or anticipated. I personally have yet to hear anyone even come close to the idea that Kryptonite is involved. I think you're going to have a variety of reactions to it. I personally am satisfied with it. I think, I hope, a lot of the other people on the books are satisfied with it because we all decided on doing it this way. I don't know that it's the best thing that we could have done, but it's probably the best thing we thought of. Personally, what I would have loved more is to leave him dead. Nobody would have expected that. Everybody said, "Oh, he's coming back. When is he coming back? He's not really dead." Well, he is really dead. Part of the twist is that he is really dead. It's not a clone. It's not Lois having a baby. It's not Dr. Doom, and every time he dies it's a robot. To some people it may not be any better than that, but at least it's not a cheat. But I would have


"-- AND HIS CYBORG COMRADE WHO COUNTERFEITS THE MAN OF STEEL --
"-- HAVE ALREADY ANNIHILATED COAST CITY AND LEFT MILLIONS DEAD AND A GOOD PORTION OF CALIFORNIA RUINED!
"IF THEY AREN'T STOPPED THEY'LL DO THE SAME TO METROPOLIS AND DRIVE EARTH RIGHT OUT OF ORBIT--
--KILLING VIRTUALLY ALL LIFE ON THE PLANET!"

"... You cannot possibly believe that everyone is going to accept what you've done."

YOU'RE DANGEROUS, CYBORG -- I DOUBT ANY PRISON CAN EFFECTIVELY PROTECT SOCIETY FROM YOU.
YOUR POWERS! HOW... DID YOU GET THEM BACK?

loved to seen him stay dead. But we got people buying the book again and all of a sudden, wow, I've got to keep reading this stuff, this is getting good again, and things are happening, and they're enjoying it and they're interested. It's like, how do you keep it going? If we just leave him dead and leave everybody hanging there, how long does that go on before it just gets boring or old hat? That would have been my personal favorite choice. What we have ended up doing, I'm very proud of the story that we've done and whatever things I might have wanted to do differently I think that we've put out real good solid stories.

DD: These are probably the most enjoyable reads that are out there right now.

BB: I think that the hardest part of all this isn't even the return. I mean it is a beginning and an end to a story that's taking a year and a ton of books–one book a week for 12 months. There's a lot of stories involved from the time Doomsday first showed up to the time Superman will return. The real trick to all of this is what do you do next. Now you're kind of ending that storyline and are the people going to stick around to see what's going on or are they going to say, "Well, it's over and now I can go buy *X-Men* again." I'm taking off...#82 is my last issue of *Superman* for at least four issues. So I'm taking a break from the book. I mean, I'm still receiving my packages and still aware of what's going on. I was at the last meeting and I'll still be at subsequent meetings to contribute ideas and so forth, but the last meeting was difficult trying to come up with ideas that would keep the readers coming back that weren't mystery stories about his death. Let's face it, that's part of what all this has been about, the mystery that's always been in the background in each story–it's the soap opera aspect. I think that's another

"The real trick to all of this is what do you do next."

IT'S HIM! ALL THIS TIME HE PLAYED US FOR FOOLS--HAD US BELIEVING HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE REAL SUPERMAN!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE! AFTER HIM!

reason that people at Lorimar picked up on it because the people producing the Superman show are the people that...one of the executive producers is the guy that produced *Dallas*. So there is a soap opera aspect and I think one of the reasons that it worked is the same reason 'Who Shot J.R.?' was one of the highest ratings television episodes. People want to know. When there's a mystery, when there's something to be found out, people want to watch and see if they can figure it out, that kind of thing. I don't know that that's what the stories are going to be like once the return occurs. I mean I have some ideas for down the road as everybody else does, but for right now I think the books need to get back to just individual little Superman stories that aren't this big grandiose scheme.

DD: Will the four Supermen be around after all is said and done?
BB: I don't know how any of that is actually being resolved. I know how it's being resolved with Cyborg and the possibility exists that he'll be around in the future if not immediately. Again, Dan has control of that character so I can't really speak for Dan. As far as the other three Supermen go, I certainly don't know what the other three writers have in store. I do think that a couple of them are going to be around and be in the books and will be seen for awhile, but that's something that other people would need to comment on or would be more knowledgeable about than myself.
DD: What is your favorite character? You mentioned earlier on that you have your favorites that you like working with. What are your favorites?

"I had like 15,000 Marvel comics in my collection and less than 300 DC's."

BB: My favorite characters? I grew up loving Thor. Thor as a kid was always my favorite character and *The Avengers* is my favorite title. To me, to this day, there are very few books that I derive as much enjoyment from as I did the Roy Thomas/Buscema/Palmer Avengers back in the '60s. Those books were solid front to back, art, story, I loved them. To me that's what comics should be. I miss the aspect of...comics has become such a visual medium, the artists are now stars, egos are everywhere and yet a lot of the people in the industry who are the top fan favorites, the work they turn out, the stories, are just non-existent and no one seems to care. No one seems to care anymore and when you pick up the book and it's all poster shots and where's the story? As a kid I first picked up comics when I was...my very first comic book was *Space Ghost*. I don't know what number it was. It was '66 or '67. I loved the cartoon series and I got the comic book. Then I got into *Spider-Man*.

DD: My first comic was *Spider-Man* #40. I'm never going to forget that one.

BB: Yeah you pick it up because something is visually intriguing, you don't really know who these characters are. I knew because it was the cartoon I liked first but for years I just looked at the pictures, the artwork. A lot of that stuff is long gone thanks to my grandmother. I loved that stuff. Then I started finding myself as I was looking at the pictures, reading to see what was going on. I got totally sucked into it. For awhile there I was buying most of the books Marvel put out and reading the stuff so when the art was good, even when the art wasn't good, if the story was good, it was a good comic book. Nowadays, if the art isn't any good, you don't even look at it. The stories aren't any good anymore.

DD: I find most of the stuff out there unreadable.

BB: Yeah, well there's so much out there now, too. I can't imagine, I wish someone would please come to me and tell me how can a kid walk into a store in this day and age, into a comic book store, and not have his brain explode. If I were a kid today I couldn't do it. There's so much to buy and there's no way you can afford it all. I couldn't walk into a comic book store right now and buy everything that's out there, or everything that I might want to buy that's out there on a weekly basis. I'd go broke. Prices have gotten so high. There's so much out there, and I think the industry just needs to shrink a little bit because so much of what is out there is just garbage that is there for no other reason than to take up a space on the shelf. The most important aspect of a lot of comic books is that little tiny corner that tells you the name of the company so that little tiny block of space, that little 7x10 space on that shelf is theirs. Whatever that product is, it doesn't matter.

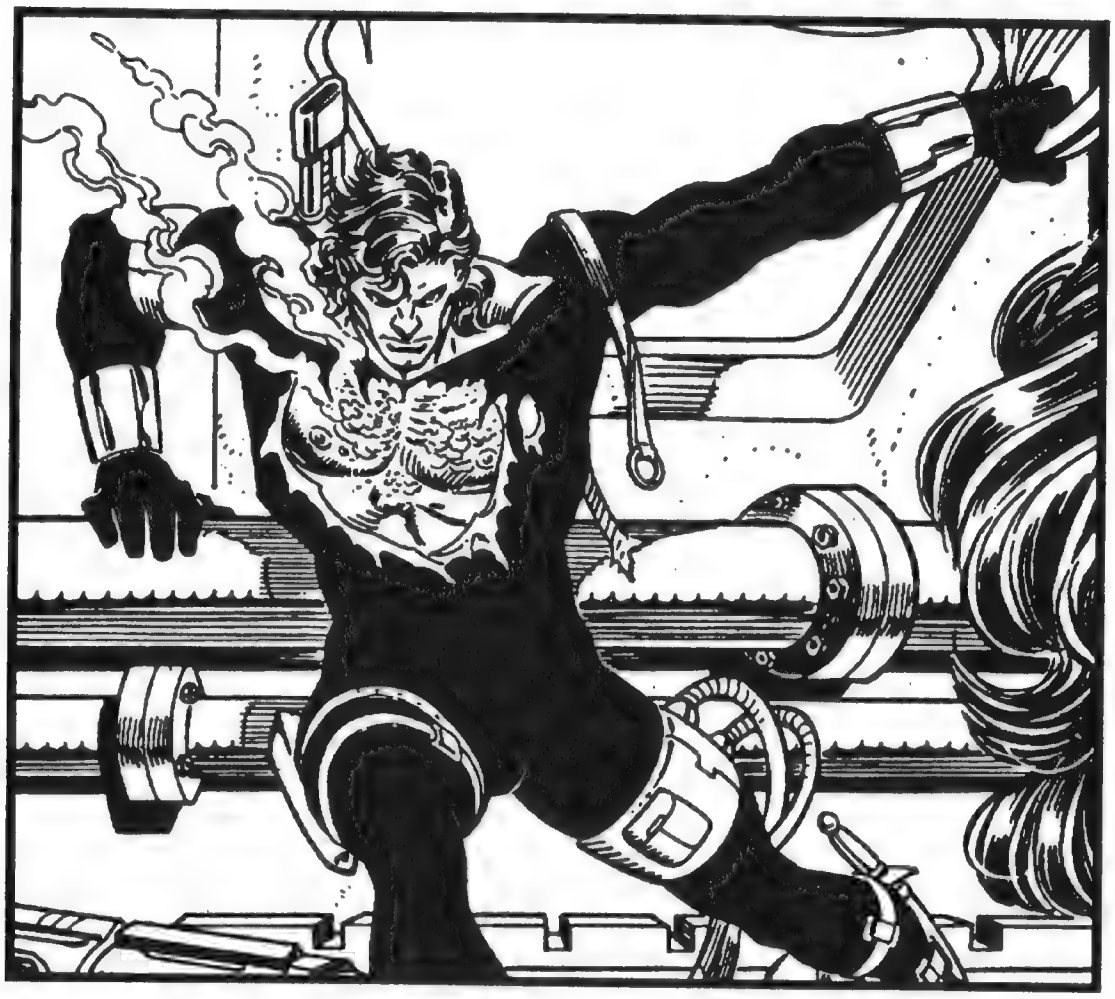
DD: Just as long as it's filling the space.

BB: Exactly. Like I said, I've been in the industry long enough to sit back and watch this stuff happen and totally change before my eyes. I'm very, very happy, I can't say it enough, that I have found a spot on the *Superman* books because I feel like it's kind of a microcosm all its own where I am allowed to stay to keep the industry kind of the way I always...the things I always liked and the things I don't like about the industry, the things that have changed and that I don't care for too much, to keep them out. They haven't really invaded into the space too much. The other thing, too when I was a kid, hell, until just recently, the last six or seven years working for DC, I had like 15,000 Marvel comics in my collection and less than 300 DC's. I never liked DC comics as a kid. I knew who Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash, I knew who they all were. They were very simple. I always loved the Green Lantern, it was always my favorite DC character. I always loved The Flash's costume. I wish they'd get rid of this foil stuff and go back to the basic red. I just thought that was a great costume. I go over to Marvel, and I'm sure this is universal to a lot of people, you go

over to Marvel and you read stories and they were real stories. They were a lot easier to get into them. When John Byrne changed Superman and Mike Carlin came along, Mike was interested in doing these Marvel-type stories and that's the other thing about Superman I love so much–is that the stories are real. He's not a bumbling idiot anymore, there aren't any dream sequences. We do nervous breakdowns, we do him or I should say the people before me did him killing people which led to the nervous breakdown and the exile in space and there are things that happened and there are consequences that are paid and these aren't dreams. They're real and they are not silly little "can these scissors cut his hair" kind of stuff. It kind of makes me chuckle to think that here I am working for DC and it's the most fun I've ever had in my career and yet my comic book collection before really starting on these books was so dramatically weighted toward Marvel. I grew up wanting to work for Marvel Comics. I didn't want...I mean when I was eight years old I wanted to do comics, whether I could or not I didn't know. I went to vocational school and took commercial art and pushed myself in that direction. I was told by my teacher to go into advertising, I had a real knack for it, for ad design and truck lettering. I had a knack for all this stuff. Never make it in comics, he told me. Neal Adams was the only person he had ever heard of, you know he was familiar with his work to some degree, it was a hard business, forget it. I tried to talk to my parents, I just pushed through. Two days out of high school I met Bob Layton at a convention, three months later I got hired as his assistant. □

"He's not a bumbling idiot anymore, there aren't any dream sequences."

DAN:



He's one of the men who killed Superman. Now, with Superman #82, he helped bring back the Man Of Steel. Recently, I had the chance to speak with Dan Jurgens and question this sudden change of heart.

Dan DiDio: How long have you been associated with the Superman books?

Dan Jurgens: I've been working on Superman since 1987. I began with that year's *Adventures Of Superman Annual* and after doing a couple back up stories, I took over *Adventures of Superman* on a regular basis.

DD: Did you always pencil and write your own work?

DJ: I only penciled the Annual and when I came onto Adventures of Superman, George Perez was the writer. He stayed on the book for about two issues. So when he left, I just took over from him.

DD: Has *Superman* always been a favorite of yours?

DJ: Yes, it has always been a potential favorite. I have always liked the character but I never necessarily liked what was being done with it.

DD: I remember when you did Booster Gold, that book was set in Metropolis, and right from the start Superman was an integral part of the storyline. You seemed to have a nice handle on the character. Have you always wanted to write Superman or was this just an opportunity that came you way?

DJ: Well, Superman has always been very, very interesting in terms of potential. When I first started working at DC, it was still the old Superman and I was not terribly interested in the character. Later when Byrne, Wolfman and Ordway took over and redid the character, they took off so many chains and shackles of the past and the potential was suddenly there. That's when I became more interested working on it.

DD: Obviously, you feel that the changes Byrne and the others brought about, like the return of Clark's mother and father, enhanced the story.

DJ: I have always said that the best thing they did when redoing the origin was to give Superman the Kents. Beyond that, I would have to say, most of the stories we've told could have been done with the old Superman. And I think the others who work on the books feel the same way. I don't think the changes in the character were all that dramatic, What they did was to give us a clean slate to work with.

DD: The death of Superman and the whole phenomena surrounding it, did it catch you by surprise?

DJ: None of us could have foreseen what would possibly happen with that book or with the entire series. I know that when we planned out the story, I really thought the book that might do a little better sales-wise. Like with past stories, we'd come in and have Batman show up for a month, and all the books would show a modest increase in sales. That's what I thought would happen, nobody could have guessed the amount of attention that it received.

DD: In speaking with Brett Breeding, he felt that all this popularity is playing against the character, now every time you do a story you have to go one up on the last. Do you get that same feeling?

DJ: There's certainly that tendency to put that kind of pressure on it but I would go quite that far. Part of my reaction to that is if we keep trying to go one up our last work, we'll build a trap for ourselves. All we can do are the stories that are true to the character and the world that the character lives in. You try to make the stories good and entertaining, meaning that just because Superman died this month that doesn't mean that next month somebody else has to die. We keep a chart on the four books tracking what will happen in each issue. To lighten things up, at our last meeting, I wanted to set up some fake charts and every month put in something like this issue Jimmy Olsen dies or Perry White buys the farm. That's the kind of

pressure there is. I think the best thing is to just ignore it and continue doing the solid work we've been doing all along.

DD: What are your thoughts about the Superman summits? It's such an incredible sharing of ideas but, because there's so many creators involved, do you feel inhibited?

DJ: I think frankly it would probably work a whole lot better if a few more of us did feel inhibited. [laughs] Frankly when we get into it, sometimes, emotions tend to run quite raw. Whenever you're involved that sort of a creative endeavor, people tend to have a difference of opinions. You aren't going to have a room with 15 or 16 people, and by this I include the writers, inkers, pencillers, and editors, even the guy who works at the hotel and brings the coffee and donuts, and find them all agreeing on the same items.

DD: As you've done with "Panic in the Sky," there's a lot of these short term, the intense crossover stories. Following the "Reign of Superman", will we see another crossover or will each book take it's own direction?

DJ: I think we're at a point where a couple of factors will influence that. One, it has generally been our pattern that after we've done a lengthy story which involves all four books, we always tend to break away for a couple of months so that we can each work at our own pace. That may also be even more true now because we have a new writer and penciler in our midst as Karl Kesel replaces Jerry Ordway and Barry Kitson replaces Tom Grummett. That book will also get a new inker. So its only natural that they get a feel for the book.

DD: Will *Superman* #82 be considered the definite return of the character?

DJ: Yes.

DD: Will the story be laid out and clearly explained at that point?

DJ: For the most part. There are just a couple of things that will need to be carried over to later issues, but it's certainly 95, if not 99 percent complete.

DD: Its been about a year since the death of Superman, was his return fully plotted or was this a story that evolved over time? .

DJ: Well, let's backtrack a little bit. When we decided to kill Superman, we did not know exactly how we were going to bring him back. A number of possiblities were discussed and we decided to go ahead, kill Superman, and work out his return later. Everyone thought we did it as a gimmick to pump sales but as I said elsewhere, that was never the case. We were just trying to tell a good, entertaining story. We thought we'd get pumped by 15-20,000 copies a month and that's about it. We decided to wait until our next meeting to figure out how to bring Superman back. Well, the next meeting rolled around, at that point *Superman* #75 was not out, but we could already feel that this was going to be different. There were so many people talking about the death, we knew the world was going to be watching and that the stakes had been raised. A couple of people, most notably Louise Simonson and Karl Kesel, had been toying with the idea of somehow doing four different Supermen or something like that. We threw it together and laid out the entire groundwork of a story that would start with *Adventures of Superman* #500 and build through *Superman* #82. At that point, it was all very carefully laid out and very carefully planned.

DD: The biggest twist coming out of the "Reign of Superman" story was the fact that the cyborg was a villain. I understand that was your idea.

DJ: Yeah.

DD: What brought about that decision?

DJ: A couple of things. We all bring different attributes to the story, I'm the guy who likes to go

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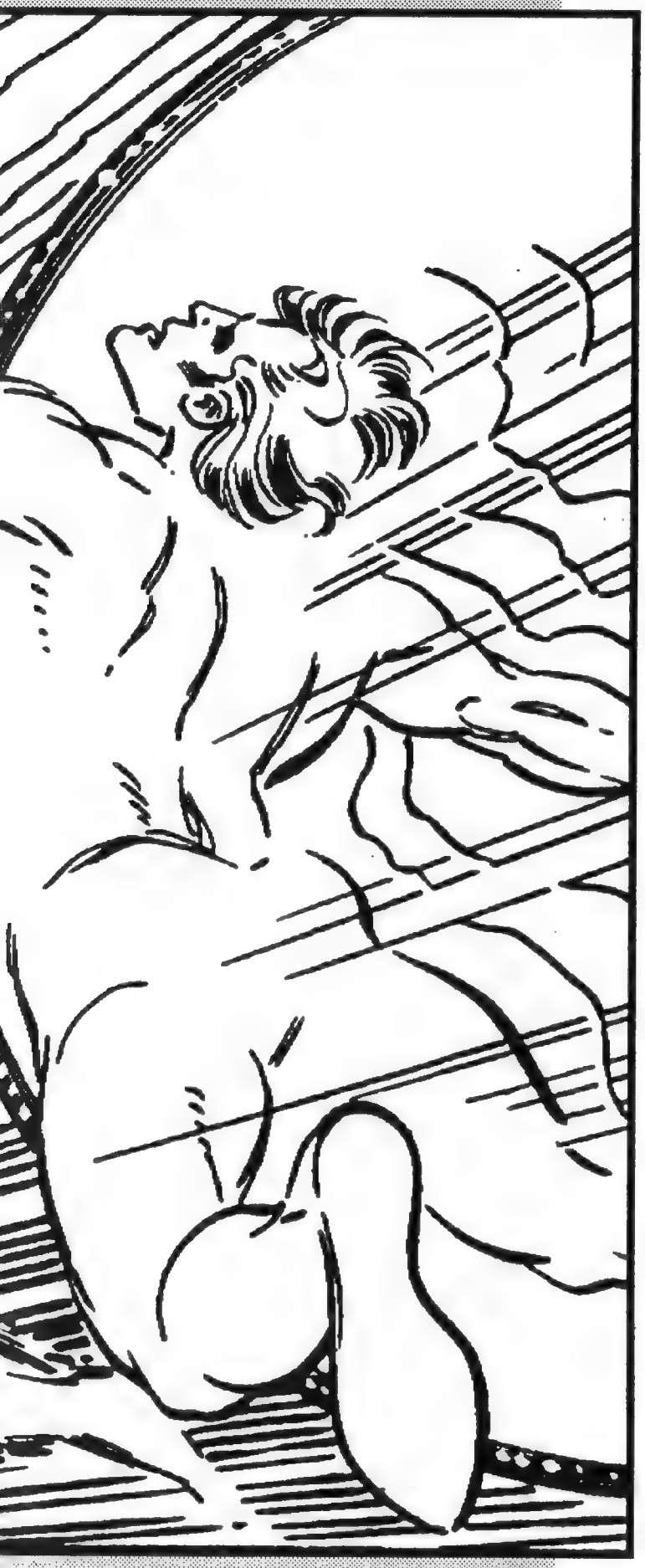

"I had decided that I was going to push for one of them to be the bad guy. Preferably mine."

in and "go cosmic". If anything, I like the big vision and frankly I am not real interested in doing the little, what I call the "Bibbo" stories. I just want to do good, fast-paced comics. As we were laying out the story back then, we had already decided to bring back Mongul. A couple of the people just weren't smitten with the idea, so we just sat there and looked for ways to make this interesting. At that point, we had placed all the different Supermen on the board. I had decided that I was going to push for one of them to be the bad guy. Preferably mine. Partly because, I'm not that interested in always writing just *Superman*. For example, if I was writing the Batman every month, it would be fun to go off and write the Joker. So as the stakes got bigger and I said, well okay, we'll have this city and destroy it and in its place will be an engine. It kept going from there. Frankly I wanted to destroy Central City, because after Metropolis and Gotham, it's probably the DC universe's most prominent city. It has always been remarkable to me that we have all these fake cities in our universe and we never do anything with them. If we have fake cities, each one of these cities should be individual with all sorts of cool stuff happening. Gotham and Metropolis come close to that. None of the other ones do. Eventually, they wouldn't give us Central City, so we ended up with Coast City instead. We had this great bad guy and frankly I just wanted to write a story where we would surprise everyone. Everyone would get sucked into thinking the cyborg was, perhaps, *the* real Superman. Those first couple of stories were very tailored to do just that, and then the hammer dropped.

DD: Do you think the whole "Reign of Superman" story could have been played out longer?

DJ: I think that we're doing it just right. It's taken between four and five months for the entire story to play out, but that's 20 comic books. That's a lot of material. I have a big complaint with comics because all over the place are examples of what I call 'never-ending stories'. They've got to lose half the readers before they get to the concluding chapter. I think in this case we paced it just right. Not to step on any toes, but if anything, "Knightfall" seems to be running a little long and has become repetitive, I think they would have been better off if it was a couple of months shorter.

DD: What sort of feedback have you been gotten on *Superman*? I guess in some ways, since *Superman* #75, you have ever been defined as Superman's killer?

DJ: Oh yeah all over the place. But even before we did the death of Superman, the feedback on the book had generally been positive. My biggest problem is that Superman has always been identified with the older readers and not the new blood out there. I don't know if we were hooking all of, what I call, the average *X-Men* reader, but I certainly wanted to get a bigger percentage of them. I wanted them to pick up a *Superman* comic and think it was cool without having to turn a blind eye to what our character is all about.

DD: I happen to agree. There are alot of people out there who enjoy reading Superman.

DJ: I've always said that the *Fantastic Four* is the best pure concept in comics because with those characters, you can tell any kind of story. It's a family, you have a husband, a wife, a mother, a father, a brother and sister, old college buddies, the whole bit. Within that structure of the family unit, you can tell any sort of human interest story. You can mess around with all the family dynamics if you want to and at the same time, you can take that family unit, with all its baggage, and send them into outer space and do the universe's biggest, greatest galactic story. At DC, Superman is the closest thing

they have to that. Superman can get as big as his fight with Doomsday or as big as "The Reign of Superman." But to me, what made the death of Superman really work was the "Funeral for a Friend" stories. You have the heroes attending the funeral in Metropolis and Ma and Pa Kent in mourning on the farm. That's what makes Superman work, it can be as big as the universe or as small as your own backyard.

DD: Let's talk about Superman #82 for a second. What do you have planned for this issue?

DJ: By this time we have a Superman mythos story in which Engine City has replaced Coast City on the western coast of the United States. The object is to turn Earth into a new Warworld, a planet that could journey from star to star and conquer other universes. Mongul and the cyborg Superman need one more engine in place on the site of Metropolis. Those two engines will enable them to blast the Earth out of orbit. Once they do that, they can tunnel in underground, build a habitat for their army of alien invaders, as well as, cages for prisoners, tunnels for the ship, etc., etc. Only guy who can stop them of course if Superman. Superman has returned, he doesn't have his powers, he goes to Engine City to stop them along with the Man of Steel and Superboy. Its an all out action finale. It does explain a couple of things and finally bring the storyline to a close.

DD: Where do the Man of Steel and Superboy play in the future of DC Comics?

DJ: I think that's hard to say right now. It's not up to me, for one thing, they're not my characters.

DD: That's an interesting statement. You have four separate books and it seems like everybody is working together, yet you're saying the cyborg is your character and those two are not. Do you need permission from other writers to bring those characters into your book?

DJ: Well, I don't know if I would need permission. But I would talk to them and ask. If I had a great Superboy story I wanted to do, I would do one of two things, I would call Karl Kessel and ask him if he would mind if I did this story, or I would just throw the idea at him and see if he wanted to do it. If he wanted to do it, maybe we would do it together. In the past we've done this with Gangbuster. Gangbuster was Jerry Ordway's character yet we all worked with it. But anything that was done in terms of the nature of the character would have been Jerry's call, just out of respect for him. I don't only feel that way with the writers on the *Superman*, I feel that way with the entire industry. I've always been amazed by other writers, telling how they get treated by the other companies. They say they get no respect and no one cares about their characters, yet they'll go off and submit a proposal for someone else's character and attempt to change that character dramatically without ever talking to anyone about it. If someone did that with Booster Gold, I would be pissed off.

DD: Keep that thought, I want to ask you about Booster later.

"That's what makes Superman work, it can be as big as the universe or as small as your own backyard."

DJ: If I was going to make a dramatic change to a character, I'd call the writer even if he's no longer interested in it. He may not have done it for 15 years, I'd give him a call and run the changes by **him.**

DD: If you're saying Gangbuster is Jerry Ordway's character, would you consider Agent Liberty yours?

DJ: Yeah, yeah, very much so.

DD: Back to Engine City. What role will it play in the future DC universe? I mean outside of *Green Lantern*, Not many other characters have aknowledged that Coast City has been destroyed and Engine City exists in its place.

DJ: Yeah you think they would have all learned their lesson last November. [laughing] I always said Marvel had more references to Superman's death in their books than DC had in theirs. Oncerning Engine City, we considered a couple of things, one was letting it stand just where it was but I realized it needed to be dealt. So *Superman* #83 is actually called "Funeral for a Friend Epilogue" and it will deal with the fate of Engine City.

DD: Will the *Superman* #82 be the end of the Cyborg Superman or will he be a recurring character?

DJ: He will return.

DD: Is that something you look forward to?

DJ: Yes. Let's put it this way, whenever you have a good villain you just never let them go. Even if I had no current plans of bringing the cyborg back, sooner or later, he would show up. I think Superman has always had some rather ridiculous villians. After Luthor and Brainiac, who do you have for Superman? Prankster, Toyman?

DD: I always had a special spot for the Galactic Golem. [laughs]

DJ: Well when you have a bunch of like that, when you get a couple of good villains, whether it's a Doomsday or the Cyborg, they deserve to come back.

DD: Speaking of Doomsday, what are the chances of his return?

DJ: We're going to be doing a command performance Doomsday three-part prestige format mini-series that will feature not only the rematch between Superman and Doomsday but also the origin of the character. I will be writing and drawing that story.

DD: That sounds like an exceptional project. When will it be released?

DJ: We were actually shooting for this November, and had it been a regular comic, we could have done it. But to do a prestige book that tight, it wouldn't have worked out the way we wanted it to. So I think we're looking at an early winter release, maybe February. I've already written the story and the first issue is plotted. As soon as I finish this Superman I'm working on, I will start drawing it.

DD: With the "Return of Superman," and "Superman/Doomsday Rematch," do you think the fans will feel cheated?

DJ: If I give them a crappy story, yes, absolutely. If I give them a decent story, no. That's what it all boils down to. After Superman #75 and during our two month layoff between *Superman* #79 and *Adventures of Superman* #500, the news of Superman's return started to build. Alot of people were saying what a rip-off, we were cheated, we knew they wouldn't have the guts to do kill him. Yet you talk to those same fans today, by and large, they haven't many complaints because they have been entertained by the stories. So my whole response is, if we bring back Doomsday for a rematch, and the story stinks, then they'll rake me over the coals,and justifiably so. But if it's a good story, I don't think the fans will mind.

DD: Will anybody feel cheated by how you brought back Superman?

DJ: I don't think so. There have been times when I felt like all those involved with these books were clicking on all cylinders. Right now we are pumping high octane. I'm very satisfied with everything that's happened since the introduction of the four Supermen. I think it all pulls together. As a story, I think we surprised the hell out of a lot of people. In this me-

"I always said Marvel had more references to Superman's death in their books than DC had in theirs."

dium, in this day and age, it is almost impossible to surprise your readers because of advance comics, conventions, and fan contact with pros. So not only did we tell a good story, but we shocked the hell out of them. No one knew that one of the four Supermen was going to be a bad guy. Of all the theories that I've read, and I've read all of them, not one was it ever suggested this. We had everybody going for a couple of months. They also didn't forsee the destruction of Coast City or the turns some of the relationships would take. So from that standpoint, I think everybody who worked on these books should feel very happy with what they did. I think it worked out extremely well.

DD: Let's change gears here a bit. I want to talk about the *Justice League*. You tried to bring them back to their glory days. Do you feel that you succeeded at that?

DJ: It was probably doomed right from the start. When I took over the book, there was this big conflict within me as well as between me and some people at DC, not necessarily Brian Augustyn, the book's editor. We had to decide what we wanted this book to be. Do we want the Giffen book or the old *Justice League*, or do we want something new and incredibly different? At that time, I didn't want to do anything like Giffen. Absolutely not. There was a lot of pressure there to keep in some of the humor, and I did that for the first few issues. But I never felt comfortable.

DD: How did you like what they did to Booster Gold? Here is a character that you created and it was turned into a little bit of a buffoon there.

DJ: It didn't bother me because whenever Keith and I talked about it, I said Booster Gold is not a guy who's going to go out and get a Ph.D or a Masters. He has some level of street smarts but he's not the brightest bulb on the planet. Certainly when you create a group book you have to deal with extreme personalities. My whole problem was when I got the book, the core group was Booster, Blue Beetle, Fire & Ice. What the hell is that? To me *Justice League* should be about power. It was funny that *Justice League* Europe had more recognizable old time leaguers than JLA. They had Flash, Metamorpho, Aquaman, and Green Lantern. My fault is, I didn't follow my instincts and make it something by pushing it along, eventually I did, but by that point, it was a lost cause. Politically, there isn't a lot you can do with the characters. There were times I was told that I could use a character only to have it taken away a couple of weeks later. When I planned on using Guy Gardner or the Atom I had them jerked away from me. So I don't think the book ever had the support which would have allowed us to do something. I tried to make it work as well as I could. I tried to pull it into the DC universe with the death of Superman. It functioned very, very well at that point, but it shouldn't have been a problem because I was writing both books. Justice League should have been able to function with any other heroes books as well. But everyone was frightened of the characters, they didn't know what type of book this was. Justice League Quarterly read just like the old Giffen books and *Justice League Europe* read like something else. Those books didn't have a cohesive identity. Even when I was working on it, Justice League was still the Giffen joking bunch, the Brady Bunch of comics, and I don't think DC was ever really interested in perpetuating a different image.

"To me Justice League should be about power. It was funny that *Justice League Europe* had more recognizable old time leaguers than JLA."

DD: Was that your idea to crossover Superman in *Justice League* during the Doomsday storyline?

DJ: Yes.

DD: Because of scope of the story, most people would expect another super-hero to be getting involved.

DJ: Right. And by the same token when we did the return of Superman story, how did we take care of the Justice League? Well we weren't crossing over with the Justice League so we'd just did the standard bit where they are sent

off on a mission in space. When in doubt always go for that mission in space.

DD: Everybody always seems to be out of town when they're needed most.

DJ: That's right.

DD: Was it your decision to leave the book?

DJ: Yeah.

DD: Why did you pick the particular time to leave? You just brought in a new group of characters, and it seemed like something was about to happen.

DJ: It happened for a couple of reasons. At that time, professionally, I was extremely tired, and personally, my wife was going to have a baby. So it seemed like a natural time to take a break. Also, I believed that no matter what I did on the book, no matter how hard I pushed, I would have to keep fighting for what I wanted, it just wasn't worth it. I don't blame anyone else except myself for how things turned out.

DD: With a new writer on Booster Gold, he's got a new look, or a semi new look. Was that something run by you?

DJ: No.

DD: What do you think of it?

DJ: Not much. but that's based on what I've seen so far, so that's as charitable as I can be. Still, I don't know where they are going with the book so I have to be fair.

DD: If Booster Gold was ever released from the Justice League, would you try to incorporate him into your Superman stories?

DJ: Yeah I have thought about it doing something with Booster within Superman. I feel like I've got a bunch of characters (Booster Gold and Agent Liberty among others) that I should do something with. Someday I'd like to revisit the Sun Devils just to let people know that they are still out there. It's funny, two years ago, I wouldn't have been interested in doing anything with Booster. Now that I'm away from it, I could actually see myself doing something with the character. I don't think I'd want to do the oft-mentioned Blue Beetle/Booster Gold series, but I can certainly envision doing something with Booster.

DD: Do you ever miss working on the character?

DJ: Well that was part of the problem with doing JLA. I just never had the time to really concentrate on Booster. Maybe someday, you never know.

DD: Okay. You used to do two books, now you're doing one. How long do you see yourself doing *Superman*?

DJ: I don't know.

DD: To work continuously on a book from '87 to present, is exceptional. Nobody does that anymore.

DJ: No they really don't. I think that it weakens the industry a great deal in terms of the overall quality or dependability. When you look at the *X-Men*, for the longest time they had Claremont as their kind of guiding light, whether you liked him or not, Chris was there every month giving the title a fundamental sort of progression. Now people

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THIS ENTIRE INSTALLATION PULSES WITH KRYPTONITE!
EVEN I CAN FEEL ITS DEADLY RADIATION WEAKENING ME!
AND IF I'M TO DIE THIS DAY--

come onto books and leave them in six months. It can really weaken the average title that Marvel and DC put out.

DD: Especially if a writer leaves a dangling plotline, when somebody else ties it up, it's never resolved to any sort of satisfaction.

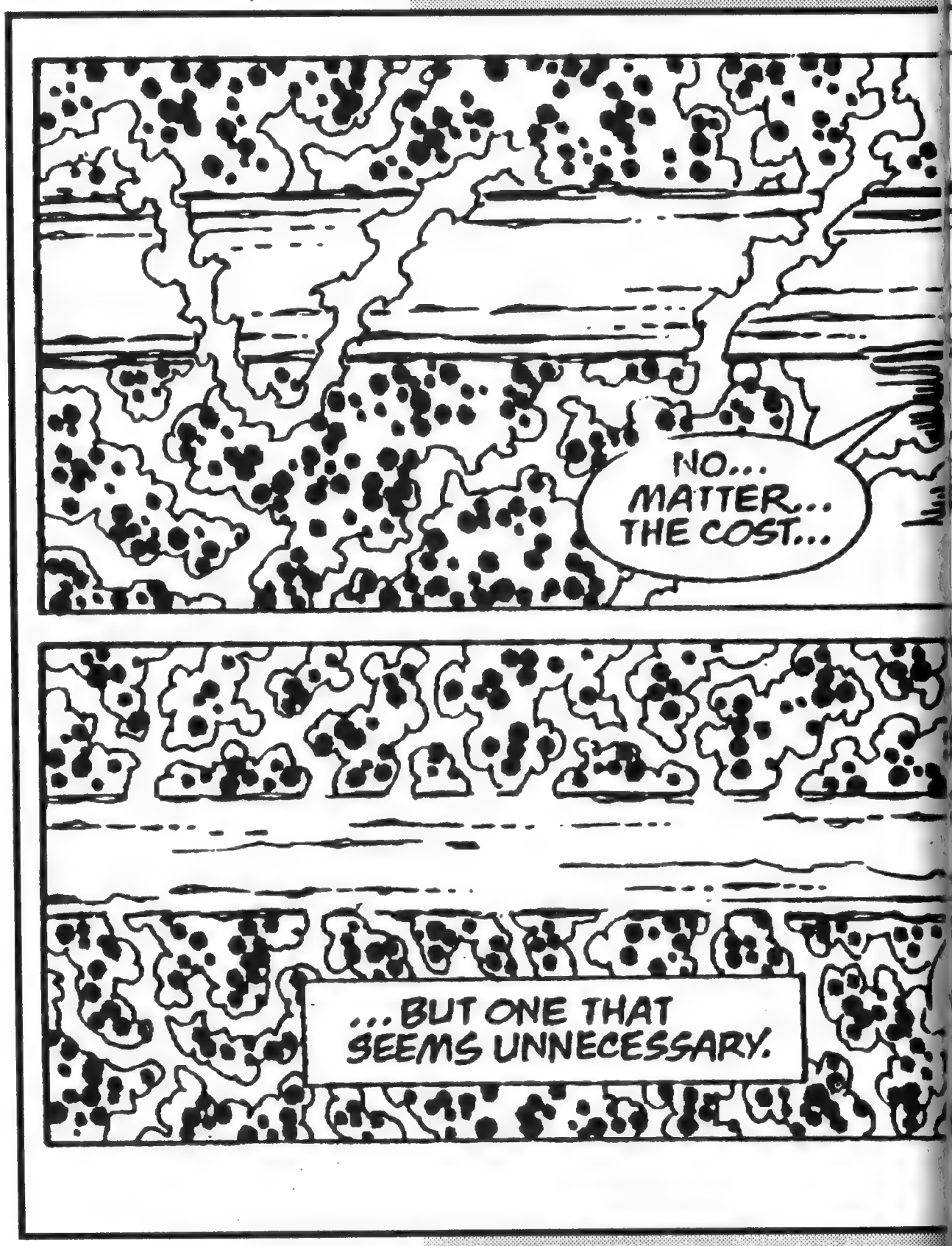
DJ: That's true. This is kind of odd since we just talked about me in context of leaving a book, but I do think of the glory days. A time when you'd see someone come on a book and know they'd be there for a minimum of two years. Those days are gone. They've totally disappeared. That's one of the things I've always liked about John Byrne. Whether you hated his work or you thought he was the greatest, at least when he'd get on a book, and by and large, he'd be there for awhile. Now I pick up books and I never know who's doing working on it anymore. So how long will I be on *Superman*? I don't know. Just like any job–you have days where you're ready to leave at five o'clock and never come back. I've had days like that on *Superman*, and then there's other days. Now that we are successful, it seems kind of a shame to walk away. We worked so hard to get to this point, it makes it harder to leave.

DD: How well does *Superman* sell?

DJ: Well, very, very well. For example, the charts I've seen suggesting that in the month of August the only book with orders better than *Superman* #82 was *Batman* #500. From what I understand of the reorder activity, I have confidence that we'll probably surpass *Batman* #500. Considering that we didn't sell *any Superman* comics in February and March of this year, I'm sure that when this year's done, there will have been more *Superman* comics sold than anything else in the industry that has four books. I'd put the average sales of any one of our books and put them up against anybody's.

DD: Let's talk about *Superman* #75 for a second. I read somewhere that something like four million copies were sold to an audience that was, for the most part, limited to buying one or two copies. There wasn't a large group of individuals buying massive amounts. So there's this incredible amount of people out there that bought a book that you wrote and drawn, and they read it. First-timers. That's a little staggering. In a way, this has to be the defining point for your career.

DJ: I think that it always will be.



DD: I would imagine that's always going to have some special meaning for you.

DJ: I truly believe that *Superman* #75 found its way to get into more individual pairs of hands than any other comic book in history. I also think, based on everything I've heard, that this book could have sold probably twice as many copies if it was sitting on the stands

"DC could have sold twice as many, probably more. Every retailer I have ever talked to would confirm this."

that first week when it came out. DC got a second printing out in record time but it was those first critical three or four days that people were looking for the book and there were none to be found. If those books would have been on the shelves, DC could have sold twice as many, probably more. Every retailer I have ever talked to

would confirm this. The last I heard is that *Superman* #75 ended up selling someplace in the neighborhood of four and a half million copies.

DD: Knowing all that, is there anything you'd ever do differently on issue #75?

DJ: I would have liked to see it printed on better paper. [laughs] Brett and I have talked about this and if we could have our wish that's what it would be. The month before that book came out you could feel that something was happening, everyone was turning in reorders right and left, wanting that book. A couple of times both Brett and I were on the phone with DC begging them to overprint. We were out there and we could see it coming. DC did overprint, but still it wasn't enough. I think that would be wish number two, to satisfy the demand for the book from day one.

DD: Incredible. Besides the Superman/Doomsday Prestige mini-series, what other upcoming projects are you working on?

DJ: Right now in terms of regular series at DC, no. I have a couple of proposals floating around but at this point no concrete plans for another series.

DD: Any plans for creator owned projects?

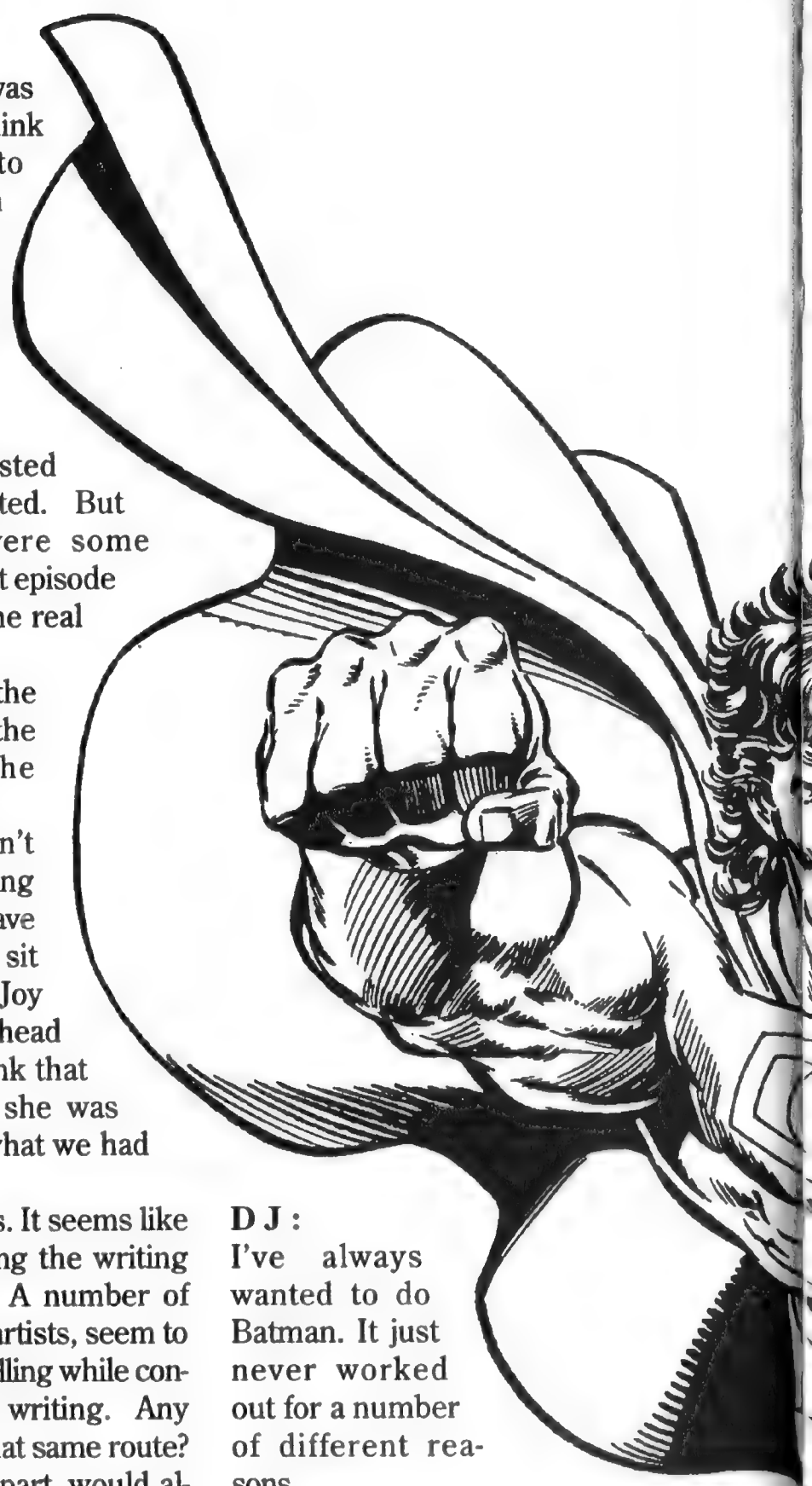
DJ: Well I'd like to and that's something that I have out there as well. But where I might want to take it or how I would like to do it, that changes almost daily.

DD: There's a new Superman television series premiering in fall. I understand that you have a chance to see a preview. What did you think of it?

DJ: I thought it was quaint. I thought it was charming. I was very pleasantly surprised to see how much they followed even the tone of the books because they certainly didn't have to. They have Ma and Pa Kent in there, and they kind of followed the current relationship between Clark and Lois. They seem to really be somewhat respectful of what we've tried to do in the series in terms of creating Clark Kent as a real human being. You have to remember that they came into this with their own preconceived notion of Superman and Clark Kent. They could have come in and seen him as the guy wearing the blue suit,and the old horn rims, the pratfalling idiot so to speak. Instead they saw someone who is a totally competent person and reporter.

DD: I understand that the costume was a little different.

"... there are a lot of writers out there whose work I have a tremendous amount of respect for and if I was ever given the opportunity to work with them, I'd be very tempted to do so."



DJ: The costume was a little different. I think they're working to change that. I mean it wasn't anything noticeable. For example, he had a square belt buckle instead of the round yellow circle. The 'S' symbol looked pasted rather than integrated. But all we've seen were some scenes from the pilot episode and nothing from the real weekly show.

DD: It sounds like the comics influenced the series and not the other way around.

DJ: Exactly. I don't know where it's going to go, wbut we did have the opportunity to sit down with Deborah Joy Levine, the show's head writer, at least I think that was her title, and she was very interested in what we had to say.

DD: Back to comics. It seems like you are always doing the writing and the pencilling. A number of well known writer/artists, seem to shy away from pencilling while concentrating on their writing. Any thoughts of going that same route?

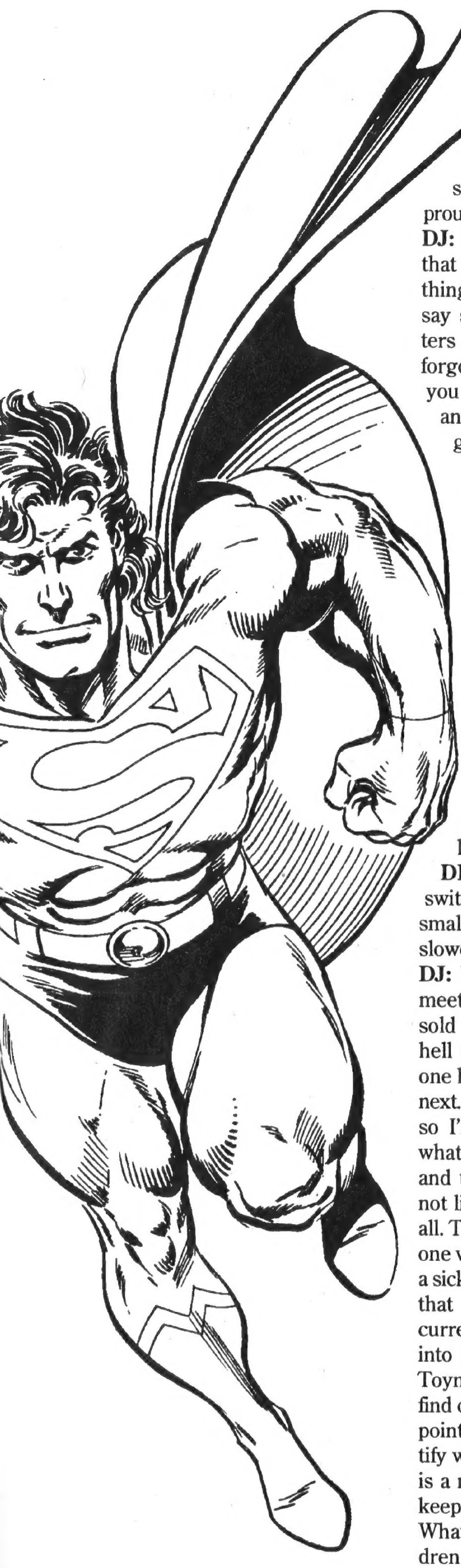
DJ: I, for the most part, would always see myself as writing my own stuff. I was recently associated with a writer on a project that did not come off. It was kind of bad experience and I thought that perhaps I should continue to work as I always had. On the other hand, there are a lot of writers out there whose work I have a tremendous amount of respect for and if I was ever given the opportunity to work with them, I'd be very tempted to do so. I have always said that there are things I can learn from everybody, whether it's good or bad. The guys who are good I've learned a great deal from, so using that as a yardstick, it would depend on the person and the project.

DD: Are there any other characters you would like to work with?

D J : I've always wanted to do Batman. It just never worked out for a number of different reasons.

DD: That sounds funny coming from a person who loves to do cosmic stories. If there is one character that stays away from the cosmic stories its Batman.

DJ: Yeah definitely. It would be different and I think that's part of the attraction. When you finish a run on a series, you necessarily don't want to do the same type of story. Maybe the same type of subject matter because with a new wrinkle, it might not get repetitive. Batman fits that criteria. At the same time though, I have done a number of small stories with Superman, there was the mailbag, wife beating and drunk driving stories, all of which could fit very well with Batman.



DD: You just brought up another point. Comparing the cosmic story to the small story, which are you more proud of?

DJ: Probably the latter, the ones that are quieter that have something to say. They come out and say something about the characters but they tend to be quickly forgotten and almost universally you can look at the sales charts and see that they drop. Yet that gets back to what I said earlier about Superman, about how it is such a wonderful concept. The beauty of character is that you do a small story one month and then send Superman off in outer space the next. That's the strength of the character. More than anything else it keeps me fresh as a writer, and I think that if I do that, hopefully, I'll keep it fresh for the readers as well. If my stories start getting too repetitive, then it's time to leave the book.

DD: Do you feel that it time to switch gears and start doing a smaller story, something with a slower pace?

DJ: Yeah when we had our last meeting, we thought, well, we've sold millions of copies, where the hell do we go from here? Everyone had there ideas on what to do next. I wanted to do Toyman story, so I'm taking the character and what I'm doing is taking Toyman and totally overhauling him. It's not like Toyman you've known at all. To me, I see Toyman as someone who has very real possibilities a sicko villian. Its the type of villian that doesn't exist in Superman's current rogue's gallery. We'll get into the storyline where explore Toyman's psyche a little bit and find out what drives an adult to the point where all that he can identify with is children and toys. His is a man that kidnaps children to keep them safe from their parents. What happens if one of those children is Cat Grant's son? I know Superman and Toyman can't go toe

"... you do a small story one month and them send Superman off in outer space the next. That's the strength of the character."

to toe, but that doesn't mean I can't craft him into a fancinating character.

DD: Earlier you mentioned that when Superman returns in #82 he is powerless.

DJ: When we see him in the beginning of #82 he's powerless.

DD: By the conclusion of the book will he be back to full strength?

DJ: By the conclusion of the book Superman will be back.

DD: What sort of changes has this whole experience been on Superman?

DJ: There's certainly a change in personality and that will play out over time. That's not going to be instantaneous and it will have ramifications down the road.

DD: What about the Lois/Clark romance?

DJ: Any change in Clark's personality is bound to affect Clark and Lois. I'm not trying to dodge anything here, but those things take some time to play out.

Lois realizes she's standing with someone who was once dead. What does that mean to her? What does it mean to their lives? How does he act differently now? If you died and somehow came back or survived a near-death experience, what would that do to you? Would would become carefree and take up skydiving or would you be afraid of the world? Those are the questions we might have asked ourselves.

DD: And the wedding. That was the big story before this big story. Is it forgotten or ...

DJ: Oh no. Not at all, not at all. It was just put by the wayside because of the death of Superman. Someday, if I have anything to say about it, not that I'm the boss, but there will be a wedding.

DD: So could the wedding be the next big event?

DJ: I would almost hope that it isn't. I would like to think that we have enough strong characters, writers and creative people to come up with a big event without it being a wedding or anything quite so dramatic. □

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WHEN USED IMPROPERLY IT CAN PROVE--
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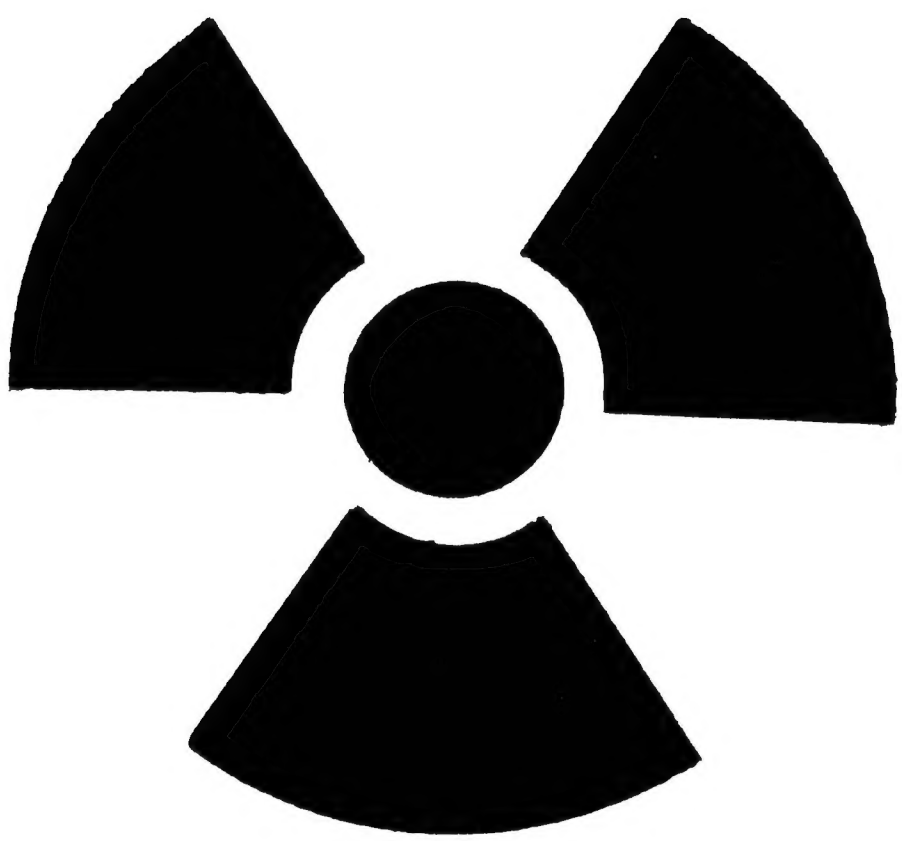

CLARK... I...
JUST REMEMBER... NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS... I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
ALWAYS.